

LEADER Event 2013

Building Bridges for the Future

Newsletter



Sharing views from different places and from different perspectives

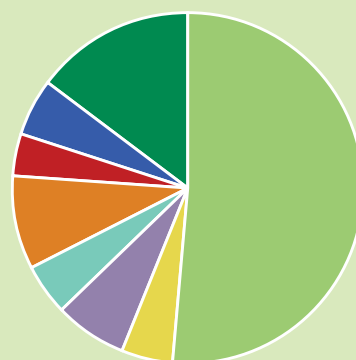
LEADER stakeholders came together from across Europe, meeting to share challenges, build understanding and work collectively to find working solutions for their national context – remembering all are partners in the shared aim of achieving success for area development through the LEADER approach.

A welcome to participants from all key stakeholder groups

A view from the LAG representative - What we have learnt from the recent expansion of LEADER is that rural areas work best when communities can go beyond the ordinary and take chances, can find the impossible and make it possible. This is where LEADER becomes a source of inspiration. Successful LEADER is about everyone being on the same side – that's how you achieve the extraordinary. At the beginning of the last Programme we looked outside our area to understand the real meaning of LEADER. We discovered that real meaning was empowerment.

A view from the Managing Authority representative - We are all here to ensure the effectiveness of LEADER. It is important for us to work with everyone on the new regulations and we must remember to share everything we learn. There has been a cultural shift which needs to grow and we must continue to learn from each other – the enthusiasm to do this is huge. We all need to be aware that we must try harder. Let's have more feedback with constructive criticism – if it's wrong what can we do to make it better?

474 People representing 34 countries participated in the LEADER event.



- LAGs
- FLAGs
- National Managing Authorities
- Regional Managing Authorities
- National Rural Networks
- Paying Agencies
- European Organisations
- European Commission and ENRD

INTERPRETATION

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What 'Building Bridges' means to me...

"Hope" Lina, Lithuania

"Sharing inspiration and developing new ideas – what can we do and how?"
Peter, Slovakia

"LEADER is the best method for working together as it is a bottom-up approach and we must remember that you always build bridges from the bottom up!"
Manon, Netherlands

"Continuity, making sure the lessons learnt aren't lost but it's also about making a new, better start for the next Programme" Laurids & Kirsten, Denmark

"Finding simple solutions to the complicated problems we've created" Sue, UK

"Building bridges between the current and future period, between people and between institutions" Sander, Hungary

"If you have to build a bridge there is something to be overcome so it is good to get in touch with people on the other side to bring ideas together"
Holger, Germany

"Cooperation – so we can solve any future problems together"
Dan, European Commission

"New ideas and solutions – building on the past to help us now and into the future" Razvan, Romania

"A bridge is something that connects the past to the future so we should use our experiences to build that future"
Krzysztof, Poland

"To understand the reality of the present period and to build the future of the next" Jordi, Spain

A view from the Paying Agency representative – This event is not only an opportunity to build bridges, but also to cross them, to start sharing and solving the challenges together. It's important for us to understand that we need to have an impact on a local level to support people to implement the Programme not just the projects. There has been a really positive effect on local governance in the new Member States and we need to enable the Rural Development Programme to take into account the delivery of the LEADER methodology.

A view from the European Commission representative – Supported by the work of everyone here LEADER has grown from a small stream, winding a slow course with many obstacles in its way, to the wide, fast flowing river we see today. This river brings sustenance to rural areas, helping them to flourish and grow. Community Led Local Development needs all the stakeholders to bridge this river and work together. These bridges are built at events like these – bringing LAGs together with Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies, creating the networks we need for these policies to be delivered effectively.



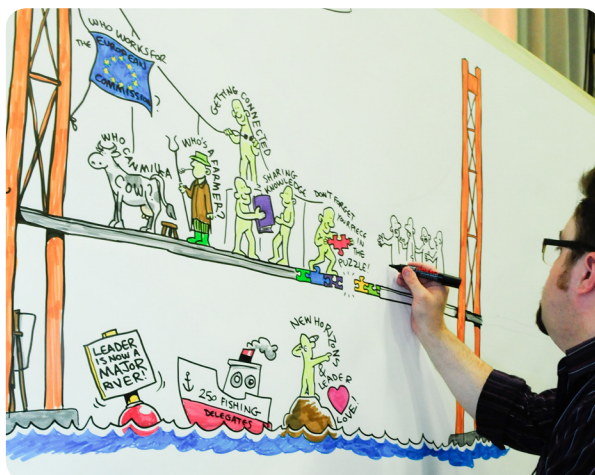
Expectations wall

Participants wrote their hopes for the event when they arrived and pinned them to the Expectations Wall – together we hoped we would...

1. **Get connected with Leader community** – Look for new contacts and networks, make connections and get connected, find Transnational Cooperation partners for the future.
2. **Share knowledge and experience** – Exchange fresh ideas, new inputs and learning.
3. **Reignite the philosophy of LEADER** – Rediscover the spirit of LEADER and its contribution to a better Policy.
4. **Share practical aspects of Local Development Strategies** – Information on the next programming period, guidance on practical application, rapid start, new tools and helping with the complexity of administration.



We came together to share the views from all our different perspectives, participating equally in the event as active speakers.



What bridges need to be built?

Concerns, expectations and solutions were shared among participants. Although we come from different countries we are facing the same problems, so we need to find and then share the solutions. A common language is spoken, the language of LEADER but we need to learn how to work together from the points of views of all actors involved (Paying Agencies, Managing Authorities, Local Action groups and others) to achieve our common interests, particularly in this time of austerity. The bridge needs to be built quickly to ensure continuity in to the next Programme period and built together to ensure it is sustainable.

Transnational Cooperation Wall

The Transnational Cooperation Wall was one of the main attractions of the Fair's 2013 LEADER event to help Local Action Groups match with peer territories and establish first contacts and get engaged in discussions for partnerships now and in the next Programme period. LAGs filled the Transnational Cooperation Wall with information that will be carefully reviewed in order to facilitate more interactions. You can already take a look at the LAGs, FLAGS and Partnerships expression of interest to work on specific topics clustered also by their area main characteristics ([for more details click here](#)).



Showcasing LEADER

We spent the evening together sharing relevant practices and lessons learned from 27 case studies within 5 main themes.

Every country had a stand at the LEADER Fair to share the finest in culture, crafts and products from their country. Along with some traditional music, wine and an awful lot of chat!

- Territorial Development
- Implementing and evaluating a LDS
- Lessons learnt from Transnational Cooperation
- Improving stakeholder engagement
- Supporting programme development





Open stream discussions

At the end of Day 1 everyone was encouraged to put forward the topics they would like to host and discuss in one of three streams focused on the design, development and delivery of LEADER.

Many suggestions were made which were clustered into a total of 31 topics some of which had more than one group discuss them. Lively, noisy and diverse debates stretched across topics and streams, resulting in the following recommendations being identified.

Stream 1: How can we **design** a Programme which captures the added value of LEADER?

- Managing Authorities should balance the time cost of effective consultation with the need to get the Programme right from the start.
- The Programme should be flexible, helping LAGs deliver to the end beneficiary not deliver paperwork to the bureaucracy; it's about delivering the right thing, in the right place to people who want it, not projects which are confined by administration.
- Evaluation needs the involvement of many stakeholders with an empirical knowledge of LAGs and LEADER, with LAGs engaged in all elements of designing and delivering evaluation.
- The seven principles of LEADER should not just be thought about at a local level but within and across the entire Programme.
- LAGs should coordinate the intervention of EU funds at local level.
- Regional strategies might work more effectively in some areas, for example supporting the implementation of CLLD across rural and urban areas.
- The multi-fund mechanism is new but the LAGs expertise and experience remains.

"A well designed Programme should enable the unusual suspects to do unusual things."





Stream 2: How can we **develop** effective Local Development Strategies and Local Action Groups?

- Good local analysis for an LDS will ensure it has the focus right and make it clear what is going to be done to evaluate it using a simple common language right from the start.
- Ensure the LDS embraces all stakeholders and all socio-economic needs.
- The activities of a LAG should be linked to the seven elements of the LEADER approach in order to measure the added value; this would enable evaluations to be designed that are common across LAGs with additional LAG specific criteria built in if required.
- Share tools for developing local participative democracy and engaging young people as early as possible.

“All LAGs should consider themselves to be new LAGs to enable them to review and strengthen structures and processes as part of the development of an LDS.”





Stream 3: How can we **deliver** the LEADER approach more simply and efficiently?

- Develop better communication between LAGs, Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies to encourage problem solving and learning by sharing through focus groups, information days, regular meetings and developing guidelines together.
- Shared management tools, such as IT systems, should be found across Members States and disseminated through open days and sharing of best practice.
- Simplify procedures through the design of a single application form for all projects and all funds, and develop specific simplified rules for small projects.
- Payments should be made easier and quicker through the use of innovative financial tools such as systems of prepayment and umbrella funds [crowd funding is about raising private co-funding and not about payment].
- Clear and stable guidance which is disseminated through information points to develop greater communication and trust among all stakeholders.
- Multi-funding support introduced through national and European one stop shops, harmonised rules and the adoption of single application forms.
- Networks should be created and strengthened; both new LAG networks and existing European networks.
- Develop entrepreneurial exchanges to encourage innovative economic development.
- Develop more effective dissemination of good practice including the use of pilot projects.

“No LAG is an island – communicate, find the right person and just keep talking and talking and talking.”





Closing plenary

We came together once more to explore each other's solutions, discuss our needs and agree our next steps. Common messages came out from the three distinct streams:

- We shouldn't wait to start developing the new LDSs or to promote the multi funding approach as they are both opportunities we need to seize.
- We must all focus on the LEADER added value based on its seven principles and capture it from Programme design, LAG and LDS development through to delivery. We should think of LEADER as a tool bringing together public and private partners, it's about people and place, and then projects. We represent thousands of people from our LAG areas so we have a responsibility to find the solutions and to remain positive.
- We need simplified procedures and common rules for the EU funds to deliver single projects and cooperative transnational projects in a more user friendly fashion - if we always do the same things the same way nothing will change. There is a need to increase communication between the different stakeholders to ensure a more efficient delivery system.

"Everything we have agreed here should happen – but we all have to be part of that process. Don't forget what you've heard these last two days, find ways to implement these solutions and then share your success with us all."

Next steps

As a first step the results of all our hard work will include:

- Expansion of the LEADER toolkit
- Workshops on targeted topics
- Extend the engagement with candidate and pre-candidate countries
- Develop the ENRD exchange platform
- Provide guidance
- Use the ongoing support at EU level for transition and the new Programme period
- Produce further publications focused on these topics

"We should all be prepared to take risks and innovate – from the Commission through to the LAGs to ensure LEADER has a bright future."

"What I've seen here is that the spirit of Leader is thriving but we all need to focus on better communication. We have started to build the bridges and now we have to be brave enough to cross them."

European Commission

Additional information, videos from the event, reports, presentation of the case studies and summary from open discussions will be available [here*](#)